

SUMMARY REPORT:

IDRC and UCT GSDPP Building Bridges Programme

Regional Workshop on Youth Inclusion in Governance and Accountability

Processes

Nairobi, Kenya

28-29 November 2017



INTRODUCTION

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Graduate School of Development Policy and Practice (GSDPP), University of Cape Town, hosted the Regional Workshop on “Youth Inclusion in Governance and Accountability Processes” from the 28th-29th of November, 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya. 35 experts from the public sector, international organisations (UN, African Union, KIC amongst others), civil society and business sectors participated in the meeting (see attached the participant list).

In support of the African Union Youth Charter, the UN Resolution 2250, the SDGs and other instruments which put youth at the centre of policy debates in pursuit of inclusivity in politics, commerce, social development and technological innovation, we identified the following objectives:

- To assess the barriers and opportunities for youth participation in public leadership and inclusive governance in Africa.
- To identify platforms available to youth movements/organizations for participation in political, social, economic and technological activities at community, organizational, national, regional and continental levels in Africa.
- To provide a platform for youth to define “Africa’s Future” and how youth are currently working towards this or hope to become involved.
- To encourage intergenerational dialogue between youth and the “elders” in redefining “The Africa We Want”, and developing a strategy towards inclusive governance.
- To identify youth “success stories” in public leadership and mapping change towards inclusive governance.
- To interrogate the “Pan-African” Agenda, and the role of youth in achieving this objective.

The thematic focus of the Regional Workshop in Nairobi, Kenya emphasized:

1. Developing a youth definition of inclusive governance in Africa and identifying the mechanisms of accountability at national, regional and continental levels.

2. Assessing youth participation to date: using statistics and case studies as a reference point for discussions.
3. Interrogating how to enhance youth participation to tackle challenges of unemployment, youth manipulation to participate in violence, how to encourage active citizenship amongst youth, and leadership opportunities for youth in Africa.

This report provides a summary of key themes which emerged during the Regional Workshop and begins the reflective process of writing up a detailed report.

State of Art: Critical Appraisal of the Status of Youth Inclusion and Engagement in Governance and Accountability: Connection between Policy and Practice

Youth definitions adopted by the African Union and the United Nations have used age as the primary, if not only indicator. According to the United Nations, 15-24 year olds are youth. On the other hand, the African Union Youth Charter defines youth as 15-35 year olds. These definitions also vary from country to country. The impact of interpretation of these definitions on policy and implementation of national continental frameworks still needs to be awarded careful consideration. On one level, it makes it very difficult to collect and analyse data to support evidence based policy making that addresses barriers to and opportunities for youth inclusivity. Secondly, it challenges the notion of youth representativity in political spaces (parliament, senior public administrative positions, and political parties), the business sector and civil society. In some contexts, constitutional frameworks limit young people's political, economic and social participation by using age as criteria for eligibility.

On another level, youth are not a homogenous group. Aside from having different aspirations, interests and cultures; youth are additionally classified as rural or urban, according to their income, whether they are employed in the formal or informal economy, and their levels of education.

The institutions and systems of African governance are arguably "dated" and the resounding question is whether they are still relevant to meet today's challenges. Youth Ministries established to bridge the gap between youth and government are constrained by financial budgeting systems, poor representativity of youth in their leadership, and the influence of political parties on the administration of their duties.

Agenda 2063 and Vision 2030 fall in the laps of ministries with limited capacity to implement their provisions.

Structural challenges also include the drafting and implementation of national plans for youth. Regional and continental organisations cannot take decisions or implement policies without member states. However, too much emphasis on the “centre” shifts focus from the potential of local governments to implement youth policies. Civil society organisations also focus on shifting policy and practice at the “centre” and often ignore the local level.

Trade liberalisation is needed for increased youth participation in economic activities across Africa. The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa) notes that financial challenges include the dependence of African states on donor aid, which contributes 85% of their budgets. The OECD recorded a complete reduction in ODA from 82 % to 41 % in recent years. Youth integration and revised funding models in regional communities are imperative.

Political will to follow through on regional and continental commitments has not been clear. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are working to promote entrepreneurship amongst youth. RECs are also an important source of data. For example, Comesa launched the Comesa Youth Programme in 2015 and a volunteer programme and the AU also runs a continental youth volunteer programme. A regional database is operational for eastern and southern Africa. RECs are working to partner with the business/private sector to promote youth inclusivity. East African youth policies intentionally speak to continental frameworks. Whether these policies translate to the reality of youth inclusivity in Africa’s rural communities and slums is another question.

Youth at the regional workshop found it difficult to engage with the AU, which they argue, is not responsive and remains hierarchical. Government departments are not actively disseminating information about the AU and UN frameworks related to youth. The rollout of the AUs communication strategy around Agenda 2063 needs to be strengthened.

Women’s inclusivity in the formal and informal sectors of the economy, politics and social development remains a concern.

The potential of individuals to act as change makers has been understated. Visionary leadership is a gap in national planning.

Youth Inclusion in Governance and Accountability: Forms, Evolution and Outcomes

The discourse about inclusion of youth has been challenged by its counter-discourse of “exclusion”. For example, political parties resist youth or isolate them in structures without real decision making power. The question of why political leaders cling to power resonates amongst young Africans. Youth at the Regional Workshop explained that political leaders struggle to imagine what comes next after politics? Succession plans within political parties are not in place. The political philosophies of African parties arguably still resonate with youth who vote them into power.

The political dream itself is not a full reflection of governance. The governance crisis has crippled all sectors and inclusivity through numbers is a quick cosmetic remedy. The question of constitutional contradictions also comes to the fore, alongside the need for behavioural and societal change. One step to avoid quick fixes is the systematic and incremental education of youth on how to be active citizens. Mentorship, parliamentary and governmental representation of youth should be implemented together to address succession issues, and the capacity gap. In Kenya and Senegal it has been found that increased representation does not translate to the increase of youth influence in decision making. Instead, youth are positioned as rubber stamps to legitimize processes and institutions. This critique is particularly relevant when discussing the “failure” of Youth Ministries in Africa.

Additional questions include how youth can act as “positive disruptors” of the status quo, when engaging with power holders is no longer effective. The contextual realities of the postcolonial state and its postcolonial leaders, have reproduced structures and forms of governance that exclude youth, women, people with disabilities and other previously disadvantaged groups. One concept that describes this reproduction of power pre and post-independence in Africa, is isomorphic mimicry. In this context it refers to the adoption of behaviours, tools of governance, broadly oppressive, by Africa’s post-independence leadership during their struggles for self-determination in order to survive. The tragedy which emerges is the striking resemblance between the colonial masters and the post-independence political leaders who have kept the systems of repression alive.

This raises the issue of democracy in Africa, in particular the democratization of organisations or “democracy within”. African leaders and their institutions have mastered the art of using democratic means to promote undemocratic policies. President Kagame’s tenure in office comes into question, as does President

Museveni and President Kenyatta's to name a few. Paul Collier's *Democracy* (2009) and its application to elections in Africa is a good reference for this point. Political transfer has not translated to economic transfer or inclusive growth in Africa. The democracy-economic development debate is important in addressing inequality in society, and political parties as the machines for accessing economic power. The struggle against inequality can't be separated from youth inclusivity.

The use of violence by institutions to maintain the status quo has produced trauma which is transferrable intergenerationally. This includes the employment of youth to use violence against political opponents, when it suits power holders to do so.

Lessons Learned: Youth Inclusion and Gender Considerations

It is imperative to distinguish between women as a dominant subset in the group referred to as youth in policy making and implementation. The representation of women in decision making across sectors remains very low. Inclusion of women in politics and power does not translate to higher outcomes. A seat at the table does not mean women now have power. It means they can be seen but not heard.

Research explains forms of explicit and implicit violence against women and girls, which remove agency. The existence of toxic masculinity casts a shadow over women and girls in families, schools, universities, political parties, businesses, and civil society.

Inequality between women and men persists globally with reference to opportunities for employment, treatment at work and outcomes. Of note, women's increased educational achievements have not translated to improvement in their positions at work. The quality of women's jobs remains a serious concern. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1998), Vision 2030, the SDGs and other international instruments affirm the universal consensus on the crucial importance of gender equality in access and quality of jobs for women. Despite this recognition, the chances of women to participate in the labour market remain 27 percentage points lower than their male counterparts. In Northern Africa, unemployment of women is more than double that of men. Women have a right to work and the barriers inhibiting this right have not been adequately addressed.

Of note, governments have not increased the social investment in basic infrastructure and measures for women and men to balance work and family commitments. The length and quality (paid or unpaid) of maternity leave has not

been standardised in Africa to ensure that women and their partners can look after their families, without fear of losing their positions. Integrated policy frameworks which also consider affordability and availability of childcare, are one way to address this.

In Africa, women's activity in the informal sector has not been accurately recorded or analysed. There is need for reliable data. The International Labour Organisation notes that women in the informal sector face low productivity; low pay and they have limited access to social protection.

Entrepreneurship as an alternative to formal employment has been critiqued. The majority of start-ups fail to establish themselves as sustainable businesses. Round pegs will never fit in square holes and the application of entrepreneurship as a solution for all unemployed youth is highly problematic.

Politically, there is recognition that women should have the same chance as men to be elected. In North Africa, 49 % of respondents to the Afrobarometer survey supported equal opportunities for women's participation in elections, whilst 46 % did not think women should have the same opportunities to participate. In Southern, Central and West Africa, more significant differences were noted by Afrobarometer. More than 70% of respondents were in favour of equal opportunities for women in elections and between 23 and 33 % were against it.

Ndlovu and Matala (2013) acknowledge the gains in women's political leadership, but the pace is not rapid. Globally three quarters of parliamentarians are men. Africa is credited for pushing women's representation in political decision-making power. Amongst the world's 20 countries with the greatest female representation in parliament, 7 of these are from Africa including Rwanda with 64% of parliament who are women. The increase in women's representation still falls short of the African Union's call for 50% of women to be represented at all levels of political decision-making.

Once again, the question of legitimacy resurfaces and the sustainability of institutions as spaces that promote inclusion. The selection of women to represent political parties, corporate bodies and other organisations is not always transparent. Women are targeted for voicing their concerns and the call for gender transformative spaces.

Translating Policy to Practice: Moving Beyond Talk-shop to Action: Examples of Inclusive and Youth-Driven Processes at Local, National and Regional Levels

Africa's education systems have been identified as the biggest challenge to inclusivity for youth. The increasing number of unemployed graduates tells the story of a system that no longer speaks to the demands of the market economy. Youth are hungry for opportunities, but the current system takes them through an education system that moulds them to be workers and not innovators. Research shows that the 2nd highest unemployment rates are in Sub Saharan Africa at 10.9 percent in 2015 and 10.8 percent in 2017. Unemployment statistics are incomplete and working youth also remain in poverty. 156 million youth in developing countries live in extreme poverty. The "brain drain" has led many youth to look abroad for education and employment opportunities.

Behavioural change at the local level through social activism in the communities is an effective method to start an incremental process of shifting mind-sets about youth and women in decision making. Social media is another tool, which has been used to encourage the values of ethics, integrity, responsibility, and respect for the rule of law.

In Liberia, Messengers for Peace is a youth-led community based organisation working with youth to move from being instigators of violence to ambassadors of peace. Knowledge and visionary leadership are key for sustainable peace and security. The African Leadership Centre trains young people to influence how society maintains peace. The Centre encourages youth to define their own visions of inclusion, governance, security and peace. Presently, youth definitions of inclusion and exclusion are narrow and require a more holistic methodological plurality and conceptual flexibility.

Pockets of youth excellence and youth inclusion need to be documented in comparative, programmatic research analysis at the micro and macro levels of analysis. Collaborative approaches to youth inclusivity and governance will strengthen initiatives across the continent. The first step is to map youth-related programmes and their approaches that speak to youth inclusion.

At a continental level the Pan African Parliament is one avenue for youth issues to be presented in policy processes. Only 38 states have ratified the African Union Youth Charter at the national level (2006). In South Africa, the National Development Plan recognizes the youth demographic dividend. Annually, the South African government sends 500 young people abroad to acquire skills. Target areas for implementation include political governance, peace and security, digital economics, the effects of marginalisation and patriarchy, and gender parity in youth participation itself.

The importance of elections at the local level remains critical. Electoral education and constitutional reforms are required to create spaces for youth participation in politics and governance in local, provincial and national government. Politics itself is ubiquitous and youth are effectively excluded from the centres of this power. The #NotTooYoungToRun Campaigns in Nigeria and increasing numbers of political aspirants amongst youth in Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania and Zimbabwe are only starting to shift the political landscape. There is a trust deficit between the existing leadership and youth. Corruption, patronage and mismanagement are the white elephant hindering local, national and continental accountability.

The politics of representation take on two forms. Firstly the politics of ideas or representation by proxy and/or the politics of presence, representation by influence. Symbolic versus substantive representation poses threats and opportunities respectively. The former speaks to representation by numbers and the latter refers to a transfer of values and mechanisms of representation in governance that foster voice, trust and loyalty.

Next Steps

Transcripts of the Regional Workshop will be made available to all participants early in 2018. A more detailed report will outline policy recommendations and provide case studies that demonstrate excellence in the way of promoting youth inclusivity in accountability and governance processes in Africa.